

Message Text

PAGE 01 SAIGON 04965 261443 Z

45

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 DPW-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02

INR-09 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14

USIA-12 IO-12 EUR-25 AID-20 ACDA-19 RSR-01 /157 W

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R 261224 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9205

USDEL FRANCE

AMCONSUL CAN THO

AMCONSUL DANANG

AMCONSUL NHA TRANG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 4965

E. O. 11652 : GDS

TAGS: PINT PINS MILI VS

SUBJECT: DAILY MR 3 SITREP - 26 MARCH 1973

THE FOLLOWING SENT SAIGON FROM BIEN HOA 26 MAR 73 REPEATED
FOR YOUR ACTION

QUOTE: C O N F I D E N T I A L/ NOFORN BIEN HOA 0036

SUBJ: DAILY MR III SITREP - 26 MARCH 1973

1. THE COMMUNIST SHELLING OF THE TONLE CHAM BASE CAMP RESUMED MARCH 25. IN THE REPORTING ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS INCIDENT AS A COMMUNIST CEASE- FIRE VIOLATION AND AN ATTEMPT TO REOPEN THE SAIGON RIVER CORRIDOR, ONE ASPECT OF ITS IMPORTANCE SHOULD BE EMPHASIZED: TONLE CHAM AND RACH BAP HAVE HELD. THE EVENTS OF THE PAST SEVERAL DAYS SERVE TO POINT UP THE NEW FIGHTING SPIRIT AND HIGH MORALE OF MANY RVN FORCES IN III CORPS.
2. IN THE EVACUATION OF THE WOUNDED FROM TONLE CHAM DURING THE FPJMC- SUPERVISED TRUCE MARCH 23, 26 OF THE 56 RANGER WOUNDED REFUSED EVACUATION; THEY WERE STILL ABLE TO FIGHT. RACH BAP WAS DEFENDED BY AN RF COMPANY AND RELIEVED BY AN RF COMPANY. TALK OF TONLE CHAM BEING OVERRUN IS FADING NOW; ENOUGH AIR DROPPED FOOD AND AMMO ARE COMING DOWN INSIDE THE WIRE TO KEEP THE CAMP SUPPLIED
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PAGE 02 SAIGON 04965 261443 Z

INDEFINITELY. MORALE AT BOTH CAMPS IS HIGH AND THE DEFENDERS ARE UNUSUALLY WELL- BUNKERED. THE RANGERS AND RF CONTINUE TO REJECT

COMMUNIST OFFERS OF SAFE PASSAGE OUT OF THE CAMPS.

3. THE VC CONTINUE TO ATTEMPT TO POPULATE HAMLETS IN WAR ZONE :.
THE LATEST EXAMPLE IS A HAMLET OF 20 FAMILIES AT TRAI BI
(XT 120680). IN ADDITION TO DISTRIBUTING LAND AND BUILDING A
HOUSE FOR EACH FAMILY, THE VC ATTEMPT TO FRIGHTEN THE PEOPLE
BY SAYING THAT THERE WILL BE NO PEACE FOR VIET- NAM, THAT THE
VC/ NVA PLAN A LARGE- SCALE ATTACK ON TAY NINH, AND THAT THE
ONLY WAY TO AVOID THE EFFECTS OF THE VC/ NVA ATTACK IS FOR THE
PEOPLE TO MOVE FROM AREAS UNDER RVN CONTROL TO THOSE CONTROLLED
BY THE VC.

4. THE ANTI- CORRUPTION CAMPAIGN IN TAY NINH HAS ACCOUNTED FOR
SOME MINOR CHANGES IN ADMINISTRATION, BUT HAS YET TO ATTACK ANY
OF THE HARD- CORE CORRUPTION IN THE PROVINCE. FOR EXAMPLE,
ALTHOUGH TWO CADREMEN HAVE APPEARED AT THE ENTRANCE GATE OF THE
PROVINCE OFFICES TO ASSIST THE PEOPLE IN THE PREPARATION OF
PAPERWORK, POLICE AND CUSTOMS CHECKPOINTS ON THE ROAD TO PHUOC
TAN MARKET AND SAIGON CONTINUE TO COLLECT PAYOFFS. REPORTEDLY,
THE CUSTOMS CHECKPOINT AT HIEU THIEN COLLECTS THE STANDARD
PAYOFF, BUT STILL FORCES TRUCKS ON THEIR WAY TO SAIGON TO LOSE
TIME AND THEREFORE RISK SPOILAGE OF PRODUCTS BEING CARRIED TO
MARKET. PERHAPS WORST OF ALL, MOST PEOPLE IN THE PROVINCE
DON' T EVEN KNOW THAT AN ANTI- CORRUPTION CAMPAIGN HAS BEGUN.

5. A DIRECTIVE FROM TAY NINH' S PROVINCE CHIEF CRACKING DOWN ON
" CARRYOUT" SALES OF POL FOLLOWS HARD ON THE HEELS OF INTELLIGENCE
WE HAVE RECEIVED REGARDING GREATLY INCREASED SALES OF POL TO THE
VC IN RECENT WEEKS. THE REPORTS SPECIFICALLY MENTION A NUMBER
OF OFFENDING GAS STATIONS.

6. BG LICH, COMMANDER OF THE 5 TH ARVN DIVISION, HAS EXPRESSED
TO US CONSIDERABLE CONCERN ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF A RENEWED
COMMUNIST OFFENSIVE AND HAS ASKED WHETHER THE U. S. WOULD
RETALIATE WITH AIR STRIKES AGAINST HANOI. ASKED ABOUT CONTACTS
WITH THE VC, HE REPLIED THAT NONE HAD YET OCCURRED AND THAT HE
WOULD HAVE TO REFER ANY VC INITIATED CONTACTS TO MR III HEADQUARTERS.

7. LICH INDICATES THAT SOME THOUGHT WAS BEING GIVEN TO
REOPENING ROUTE 13 TO AN LOC (BINH LONG) BY USING
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PAGE 03 SAIGON 04965 261443 Z

CIVILIAN ENGINEERS, UNDER SOME SORT OF ICCS SPONSORSHIP. THIS DOES
NOT YET APPEAR TO BE A FIRM RVN PLAN, HOWEVER.

8. A DEMOCRACY PARTY ORGANIZER IN TRI TAM DISTRICT (BINH DUONG)
REPORTS THAT HE HAS ORDERS TO ENROLL ALL VOTERS IN THE PARTY,
BUT TO SEGREGATE UNRELIABLE MEMBERS SO AS TO PREVENT THEM FROM
PARTICIPATING IN PARTY ACTIVITIES.

9. ENEMY MILITARY ACTIVITY IN DUC THANH DISTRICT (PHUOC TUY) HAS

INCREASED SHARPLY IN THE LAST 48 HOURS AND APPEARS TO BE DEVELOPING ALONG THE LINES OUTLINED BY PHUOC TUY PROVINCE CHIEF, LT. COL. BICH (REPORTED EARLIER). FOR THE LAST TWO MORNINGS, COMPANY-SIZE RF OPERATIONS HAVE BEEN NECESSARY TO CLEAR LTL 2 IN BINH BA, ABOUT THREE KILOMETERS SOUTH OF DUC THANH DISTRICT HEADQUARTERS. THE CLEARING FORCE HAS COME IN CONTACT WITH AN ENEMY FORCE ESTIMATED AT TWO BATTALIONS DRAWN FROM THE NVA 33 RD REGIMENT AND 274 NVA BATTALION. A NUMBER OF AIR STRIKES WERE REQUIRED DURING THE PAST TWO DAYS TO COMPLETE THE ROAD-CLEARING OPERATIONS IN BINH BA, WITH SECONDARY EXPLOSIONS REPORTED. LT. COL. BICH REPORTED THAT THE ENEMY BATTALIONS HAVE PULLED BACK FROM THE HIGHWAY AND ARE LETTING SOME CIVILIAN TRAFFIC THROUGH, BUT THEY REMAIN CLOSE TO THE ROAD IN ENTRENCHED POSITIONS, AND RESIDENTS ARE STILL FLEEING BINH BA. TO FORESTALL THE ENEMY CUTTING LTL2 AND ISOLATING THE RF/PF FORCES NORTH OF BINH BA AND UNITS OF THE 18 TH ARVN DIVISION OPERATING EAST AND WEST OF THE ROAD IN THE AREA OF CAM MY VILLAGE, PHUOC TUY, LT. COL. BICH HAS REQUESTED III CORPS TO PLACE AN ADDITIONAL BATTALION AT HIS DISPOSAL.

10. UNITS OF THE 18 TH ARVN OPERATING IN DUC THANH HAVE REPORTED GROUND PROBES AND MORTAR ATTACKS, BUT NO LARGE SCALE ATTACKS ON THEIR POSITIONS. PHUOC TUY SECTOR HAS NO REPORTS OF FRIENDLY OR ENEMY CASUALTIES FROM THE 18 TH ARVN.

11. APPARENTLY, RESUPPLY AND REINFORCEMENT FROM BLACK HORSE DIRECTLY SOUTH DOWN LTL 2 IS NOT CONTEMPLATED. ARTILLERY, AIR STRIKES AND LOCAL FORCES WILL BE USED TO KEEP LTL 2 OPEN NORTH FROM BA RIA UNTIL REINFORCEMENTS ARE RECEIVED. RVN PLANS TO CLEAR THE REPORTED TWO ENEMY BATTALIONS OUT OF THE RUBBER PLANTATION ALONG LTL 2 IN BINH BA ARE UNCLEAR AT THIS POINT. THERE IS NO DISCERNIBLE PATTERN OF DIVERSIONARY ATTACKS ELSEWHERE IN PROVINCE TO TIE DOWN FRIENDLY FORCES, ALTHOUGH
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PAGE 04 SAIGON 04965 261443 Z

ELEMENTS OF THE 33 RD NVA REGIMENT HAVE BEEN DETECTED WITHIN 6 KM OF QL 15 NEAR PHU MY, WHERE THAT HIGHWAY HAS OFTEN BEEN CUT. LT. COL. BICH IS CLEARLY WORRIED ABOUT THIS PROSPECT AND IS FOLLOWING THE SITUATION CLOSELY.

12. LT. COL. BICH ALSO STATES THAT HE HAS BEEN IN CONTACT WITH CAPTAIN IAN PATTEN, CANADIAN CONTINGENT LEADER OF THE XUAN LOC ICCS TEAM, ABOUT THE ACTIVITY IN DUC THANH. WHILE BICH ALSO REPORTS THAT THE RVN PHUOC TUY LIAISON OFFICER WITH THE FPJMC HAS REPORTED THE VIOLATION TO BIEN HOA AND THAT CAPTAIN PATTEN HAS BEEN IN TOUCH WITH HIS SUPERIORS IN BIEN HOA, NO OFFICIAL WORD HAS BEEN RECEIVED ON WHEN AND IF OFFICIAL INVESTIGATIONS WILL BE MADE OF THE INCIDENTS. LT. COL. BICH IS CLEARLY COUNTING ON CANADIAN CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE ICCS NEXT WEEK TO GET EARLY AND FAVORABLE ACTION ON HIS REQUEST.

13. CANDEL MEMBERS ARE TALKING AND ACTING AS THOUGH THEIR CONTINUED PRESENCE ON THE ICCS IS JUST A MATTER OF THE ANNOUNCEMENT COMING OUT OF OTTAWA. SEVERAL OF THEM IN BIEN HOA ANDElsewhere IN MR III HAVE TOLD US THAT THEY HAVE WRITTEN THEIR FAMILIES SUGGESTING THAT THEY DISCOUNT NEWSPAPER ARTICLES WHICH IMPLY IMMINENT DEPARTURE.

14. THE POLISH MEMBERS OF THE ICCS TEAM FOR BEN CAT HAVE PULLED OUT OF LAM SON ONLY A WEEK AFTER THEY ARRIVED, OSTENSIBLY BECAUSE OF ARVN' S FIRING OF ARTILLERY FROM LAM SON. THE HUNGARIANS, HOWEVER, REPORTEDLY HAVE ORDERS TO STAY. SINCE THE POLES HAD BEEN COMPLETELY INACTIVE SINCE THEIR ARRIVAL, THEIR DEPARTURE WILL NOT SIGNIFICANTLY DETRACT FROM THE BEN CAT TEAM' S OPERATIONS. WALKINSHAW QUNQUOTE.
BUNKER

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Message Attributes

Automatic DecapTIONing: Z
Capture Date: 07 MAY 1999
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 26 MAR 1973
DecapTION Date: 28 MAY 2004
DecapTION Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973SAIGON04965
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: SAIGON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730348/abqcehab.tel
Line Count: 180
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: NOFORN
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: NOFORN
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 18 OCT 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <18-Oct-2001 by smithrj>; APPROVED <28-Dec-2001 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> jms 971224
Subject: DAILY MR 3 SITREP - 26 MARCH 1973
TAGS: MILI, PINS, PINT
To: STATE
FRANCE
CAN THO
DANANG
NHA TRANG
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

